

## The Lord's Supper: Why the Cup???

### The Cup & The New Covenant

What is so important about this brief religious ceremony that we call 'the Lord's Supper' or 'Communion'?

If we overlook the meaning of the Lord's Supper and its importance, I am convinced that we will risk making the Lord's Supper mere religious ritual void of any blessing from God.

The Last Supper was the last time that Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples. When Jesus asked the disciples to drink the cup, he referred to it as "the new covenant in My blood." This statement refers back to a time in the history of Israel when they first received the law from God. Moses gave the law of God to the people just as he had received it on the mountain. (Read about the Law beginning in Exodus 20.)

The 'covenant' that God made with Israel included what is called the Law of Moses. However, the 'old covenant' contained more than law. The last thing that Moses related to the people on that occasion was God's promise (Exodus 23:20-33).

God had made a covenant with Abraham which included three great promises which he renewed with Abraham's descendants, Isaac and Jacob. When Israel was delivered from Egypt there was no longer a single man at the head of the family – Israel was a nation!

The first promise to Abraham had become a reality; his descendants had become a nation of people. *God then carried his promise forward to the entire nation.* He promised that he would bring them into the land of Canaan, his original promise to Abraham. This was His covenant.

Upon receiving the law and the covenant promise, the nation of Israel agreed to follow God's

law. To seal the covenant between God and Israel, an animal was killed. The blood was sprinkled on the people and the animal was burned on an altar as a sacrifice to God. The remaining blood was poured out at the base of the altar.

Jesus referred to *the cup* at the Last Supper as "the new covenant in My blood." In this statement He drew a parallel between Himself and the sacrifice that was offered when Israel received the original covenant promise. He was indicating that His blood would be *poured out* for the new covenant between God and man.

The cup in the Lord's Supper (the juice) finds its meaning, not in the Passover meal, but in the sacrifice and blood associated with God's covenant promise to Israel.

While the old covenant contained many laws, central to the covenant was the *promise* of the land inheritance for Israel. Similarly, central to the *new* covenant is a *better* promise. The better promise is not a temporary physical land inheritance. Rather, the Christian has received the *new covenant* with the better promise of everlasting life. (Read about this in Hebrews 9.)

Jesus connected the blood that would come from His crucified body to the covenant promise of God. His blood is our promise of eternal life.

**During an observance of the Lord's Supper, when a Christian drinks the cup he is to remember Jesus who brought a *new covenant with a better promise, everlasting life.***

What shall we teach our children about the Lord's Supper: Religious ritual? Sorrow for sin? Or joyful celebration of promise of eternal life?

Mark Stinnett